

Who Needs More Than one Opinion?

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Net neutrality is about the ability to choose the content you see and use on the Internet. As of now you are the ultimate decider on what you see and use on the Internet. What if one day you decided to look up something on Google, and you found it to be running so slow that you gave up after much irritation and used a different search engine. Maybe Google is having trouble dealing with all its' traffic, or maybe your Internet Service Provider or ISP has agreed with a different search engine to give exclusive Internet traffic to them in the exchange for money. The idea of the web is nothing new. Here is what Bob Kahn one of the architects of the Internet had to say about Net Neutrality.

When, seventeen years ago, I designed the Web, I did not have to ask anyone's permission. The new application rolled out over the existing Internet without modifying it. I tried then, and many people still work very hard still, to make the Web technology, in turn, a universal, neutral, platform. It must not discriminate against particular hardware, software, underlying network, language, culture, disability, or against particular types of data. (Kahn)

The ability to connect to the Internet is something that should be shared with everyone without discrimination. We must pay for the ability to connect and we may pay for a higher or lower quality of service. The idea of having to pay to connect is not the issue. The issue is that no one should have the right to pay for exclusive access to me limiting the points of view that a I have access to (Kahn). The lines for people who are for and against Net Neutrality are blurred. Many like to see the issues in black and white, but there is a large number of people who see this issue in gray.

We log on to the Internet everyday we look up information that 20 years ago would have taken us hours, days to do. I sit in bed and experience the world, different points of view and hundreds of millions of ideas. But we take it for granted. We all do, we get upset when our connection speed is too slow or if our video does not load fast enough. Think if this headache was being forced on you by your ISP. People for Net Neutrality feel that the free flow of Ideas should be constant and uninterrupted or controlled by corporations. Although many have mixed feelings when it comes to Net Neutrality the major supporters for Net Neutrality are Democrats, small groups of citizens, small businesses, nonprofits, individuals, bloggers, Internet posters, Pod-casters, Internet radio sites (Broache). Congress is pushing a law that would abandon the Internet's First Amendment The impediments on Net Neutrality are always in effect. France has set some of the strongest Internet regulations. France—always a step ahead in regulation—has fingered another threat to neutrality: Apple's iTunes service. In a vote scheduled for today, the French parliament will vote on whether to require Apple to open its iTunes service to competing tune providers". (Gattuso)

The United States preaches Net Neutrality to foreign Nations but will itself not relinquish the power it so wants. Currently the "US House of Representatives will not support Net Neutrality, but a congressional subcommittee passed, by acclamation, a bill that would essentially require Net Neutrality of other countries and companies abroad" (Pulver). As a nation the decision has to be made on the ideas set forth by Net Neutrality, but the question still remains that with major

corporations spending hundreds of millions of dollars can we have a level playing field?

The opposition to Net Neutrality says that they only want to look out for what is best for the customers, by lowering prices and creating faster connection speeds. The major opponents against Net Neutrality are Republicans, major tech companies, Major telephone and cable companies — including AT&T, Verizon, Comcast and Time Warner. These companies seem to be winning the battle in recent months. A bill was recently put to a vote in Congress and “by a 34-22 vote, members of the House Energy and Commerce Committee rejected a Democratic-backed Net neutrality amendment that also enjoyed support from Internet and software companies including Microsoft, Amazon.com and Google” (McCullagh). This recent defeat is one that may be attributed to the lack of knowledge on the subject, or the extreme lobbying by major corporations. The powerful corporations will continue to lobby for zero net neutrality until they feel that their hold is strong enough to pull our eyes towards any product of their choosing.

Major telephone and cable companies — including AT&T, Verizon, Comcast and Time Warner — are waiting outside the entrances to the Internet super highways trying to get the master key (“Frequently asked Questions”). This master key would allow these corporate giants to decide how fast one page loads from another and which page will not load at all. These massive corporations would like to place tolls on data, making some web sites faster, some slower, and yet some that will be too slow to run at all. They would like to create express lanes for their content, the content that is deemed acceptable and the content that can be pay the harsh tolls. These mammoth companies spend hundreds of millions to try to persuade lawmakers to kill the Internet as we know it, placing restrictions on you, me, and the free flow of information. Time’s person of the year this year was no other than “you.” This refers to all of us, the blogger, the video broadcaster, the Internet poster, the person with the small informational website. With no Network Neutrality the places that you go now would look drastically different. Loading video for Youtube and viewing your friends Myspace would take hours, or would not take place at all because they would simply have to shut down. The information, and different points of views you seek would be difficult to find if a select few were chosen to decide what would get the highest and lowest bandwidth. These restrictions on bandwidth will kill the smaller Internet providers and will limit the number of voices and views that are able to broadcast themselves. With the silencing of these voices our ideas will wither and perish. Our differences, our ideas are the things that make us different. These voices are helping to dictate our democracy. As said Eugene McCarthy “As long as the differences and diversities of mankind exist, democracy must allow for compromise, for accommodation, and for the recognition of differences” (McCarthy). Our democracy is being attacked by the major telephone and cable !
companies
are without recognition and action they will slowly continue to chip away at our ability to broadcast our ideas.

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